

"Today we are one people."



Quote: Willie Pierre, Spiritual and Cultural Elder of Katzie First Nation. Photo: Don Staniford

Hundreds of people paddled over a hundred miles along the Fraser River and across the Salish Sea to deliver a message to the Cohen Commission:

Get Fish Farms Out!

The unprecedented expression of solidarity among indigenous communities, non-native environmentalists, politicians and business owners culminated in the delivery of a petition with 11,000 signatures to the Cohen Commission. The people want an end to the secretive, self-regulated open-net-cage salmon farming industry on the BC coast.

People from Tsilhqot'in to Tla-o-qui-aht; St'át'imc to Homalco

and even further rafted and paddled from Boston Bar to Vancouver. Hundreds more converged in Musqueam territory on Monday, October 25, marching from the final stop, Jericho Beach, to the Cohen Commission's opening day of evidentiary hearings downtown.

The Paddle was carried out by at least 200 participants who were hosted by Sto:lo and Musqueam communities and Councils. The Salmon are Sacred

organization coordinated the Paddle and fund-raised for this, the next leg of the *Get Out Migration* - a march from Tofino to Victoria in April and May of this year.

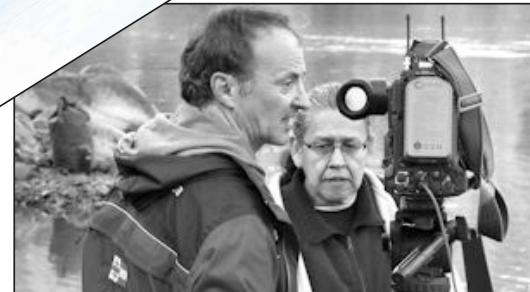
Biologist Alexandra Morton has led both journeys along with Chief Bob Chamberlain, Kwicksutaineuk, and the call for the salmon feedlots to get out of wild salmon migration routes.

Morton has standing at the Cohen Commission of Inquiry

into the 2009 Fraser sockeye collapse. Within the Aquaculture Coalition there, she is demanding that fish farms release their records of disease outbreak for the past 20 years. "I think they would rather leave than release those," she says; "that's how bad it is."

Salmon farming impacts on coasts around the globe all feature dramatic declines in wild salmon.

Special report from Lillooet to Vancouver by Kerry Coast



In the photos:
Left, Alexandra Morton and Chief Marilyn Baptiste in Vancouver; Center: entering Skwah. Photos by Don Staniford
Bottom left: Melaney Gleeson-Lyall at Musqueam; Right: Eddie Gardner, Seabird, in Hope with CBC. Photos by Kerry Coast

... the speech that launched a raft through Hell's Gate.

An introduction to one biologist's experience with salmon farms on the coast.

— Alexandra

Morton spoke to a full room at the Cayoose Band hall on Monday, October 18.

The biologist who has spearheaded opposition to coastal fish farms by her independent research and activism has met with great support throughout the Fraser watershed on a three week tour of headwater communities.



On the evening before departing by raft towards Hope, Morton presented on her experience on the coast and sought the stories of St'át'imc people. Morton's story pertains to the introduction of salmon farms on the BC coast, and how that interrupted her research on killer whales. She lives at Echo Bay, in Kwiksutaineuk Ah-Kwa-Mish territory.

"I went to Echo Bay to study killer whales. In following whales, the whole pattern is about the salmon."

The first animals to be affected by the fish

farms were the whales I was studying. Seals love to eat the farmed fish because they are so fatty - you can take a fresh farmed fish, scrape the flesh off the skin and make a snowball of it and squeeze out the fat. There's no muscle. So the fish farmers put down noise makers that are the equivalent of a jet engine at take-off. The whales never came back to those areas.

The next thing was the use of chemicals. We had empty barrels wash up on our shores. Fish farmers never talked about what those chemicals are, but the label says not to let the dust

of this product go into waterways. It was actually the paint they put on the underwater net cages. That paint eventually chips off.

Then we noticed as soon as fish farms came around that our hatchery fish had diseases when they came home.

The problem with fish farms is that they break all the natural laws. Wild salmon are nomads - they leave the sick behind; they don't pollute because they move on. Wild salmon come home and die, and the babies can't contract any pathogens the adults might have been carrying.

Chief Perry Redan of Cayoose welcomed Alexandra Morton, second from right, and 60 other people to the talk about fish farms. T'it'q'et Tribal Chief Shelley Leach, left, Eleanor Wright of Salmon Talks, and Chief Arthur Adolph, Xaxl'ip, had questions and comments.

But in fish farms, you have all the generations in the same place.

You may have heard about sea lice. They are not really lice, but more like little crabs. They scuttle along adult salmon and live off them, but they can't survive in freshwater so they die off as soon as the salmon return to the rivers. Normally, juvenile salmon would not encounter the adult salmon returning with sea lice until July or August, when they have grown scales. But the fish farm salmon have sea lice, and the juvenile outmigrating salmon encounter them as soon as they get into the ocean - before they have scales. The sea lice suck the life out of them, they starve, and they die.

In 2003, the government ordered the farmers to

fallow the feedlots in the Broughton Archipelago. The number of lice found on smolts dropped down to nothing. After that, DFO actually denied that study had ever happened.

Here are pictures of Fraser sockeye smolts with an average of twelve lice on them. I did an experiment where I fed smolts that had no lice, and I fed smolts that were covered with lice. With the lice infested smolts, when I fed them the water boiled in a feeding frenzy. When I fed the natural smolts, they just calmly fed on the food, they were relaxed. Sea lice are sucking the smolts dry, and they starve to death.

When I first discovered these lice-infested smolts floundering around my buoys out in the bay, I called DFO and told them



Salmon Talks, Lillooet, held a special send-off ceremony on the morning of Tuesday, October 19th, to connect the mid-Fraser to the Paddle for Wild Salmon, and send up prayers for a safe journey through Hell's Gate to Hope that afternoon. It was led by Christine Jack and Ina Weber. Along with Alexandra Morton, 13 Salmon Talkers made the trip.

about it. They said, catch us some, we'll take a look. So I caught some, and the next thing there was a DFO officer on my doorstep saying I didn't have a license to catch that age class.

I eventually went to a lawyer, Greg McDade, about the problem. He said, this isn't legal. He said, the province can't run fish farms in the ocean. So we won in court, and the regulation and licensing of fish farms is now in the hands of DFO. I'm not sure that helped.

All the fish farms' leases are expired; they are unconstitutional in Canada - you can't own fish in the ocean; and the farms won't allow provincial veterinarians in to the farms.

This fish farm industry, everywhere it goes wild stocks go into decline. For government to allow the fish farms into this migration route is very risky management.

When the fish farms have a disease outbreak, they release a "quarantine" notice. But you can't quarantine in the ocean. Particles travel ten kilometers in six hours. During one outbreak in 1992, boats carrying Atlantic fry to other fish farms passed by

"We do know that what happened to the 2009 returning year, the smolts that left in 2007, the problem was between the mouth of the Fraser and the top of Vancouver Island. They didn't make it past the 70 fish farms."

areas that had the IHN virus outbreak. Those boats cycle water in from the sea over the juvenile salmon as they travel, and as they passed the outbreak, all those fry became infected as they were transferred up to Ocean Falls in Bella Bella.

Fish farms have outbreaks of the IHN disease. Fraser salmon swim through the fish farm areas during outbreaks. If a hatchery gets IHN, you have to dry that hatchery out. In 2003/04, the outbreak affected 12 million Atlantics for six years. DFO did nothing.

Recently they looked into the RNA of Fraser sockeye and said they have a new virus. It's ISA. This disease follows fish farms around the world. It came from Chile, and before that it came from Norway. It comes to us now in the eggs that Norway sends us.

I have standing with the Cohen Commission, so it's my job to tell him all he needs to know about fish farms. So I asked the farms for a record of their disease outbreaks, and they just said no.

The one Fraser sockeye run that has been increasing over the last 18 years is the one that turns south out of the Fraser and swims around the west coast of Vancouver Island. That's the Harrison. All the

other Fraser sockeye travel up between Vancouver Island and the mainland, and they have been decreasing. They have to pass 70 fish farms to get to sea.

I have now been part of five major government investigations, and they have all gone sideways - even when MLAs and scientists have said, get the fish farms off the migration routes and make the farms' disease information transparent. Now, unless we force Judge Cohen to get that disease information, this Inquiry is not going to help either.

We're trying to do everything we can to protect the salmon but I realize now the science is not going to do it. We need to convince the government to change its behaviour.

What we're talking about is a loss of democracy. When we were walking down Vancouver Island, the First Nations people said to us, 'now you know how it feels to be us: to have no control and to be railroaded into extinction. Just look at the buffalo.'

People say to me, 'well, I don't eat much salmon.' And I say to them, do you breathe? Because if you're breathing, every time the south wind blows you are breathing air made by trees that were fed by salmon.

"People say to me, 'well, I don't eat much salmon.' And I say to them, do you breathe?

Because if you're breathing, every time the south wind blows you are breathing air made by trees that were fed by salmon."

The question has been posed, why the big sockeye return in 2010? I've been asking all the Pacific Salmon

Commission scientists that

same question, and they don't know. My thought is that when we started breathing down the fish farmers' necks, they started cleaning up their acts.

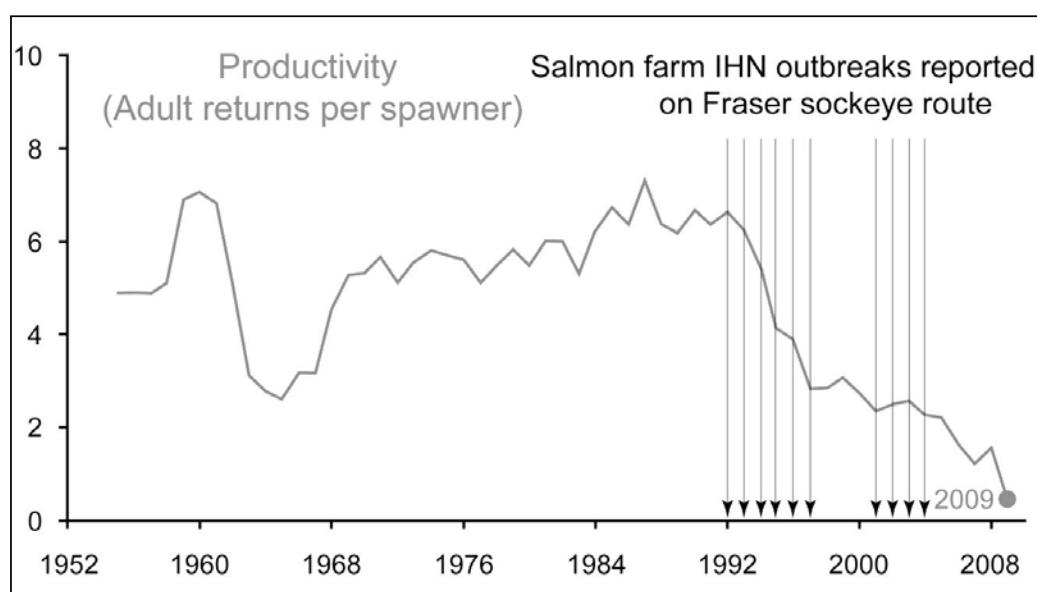
Unless we get those disease records, we won't know; unless we get the SLICE application records, we won't know if it was a window of cleanliness that allowed those juveniles to pass by unharmed. I think we should have been getting this run all along.

We do know that whatever happened to the 2009 returning year, the

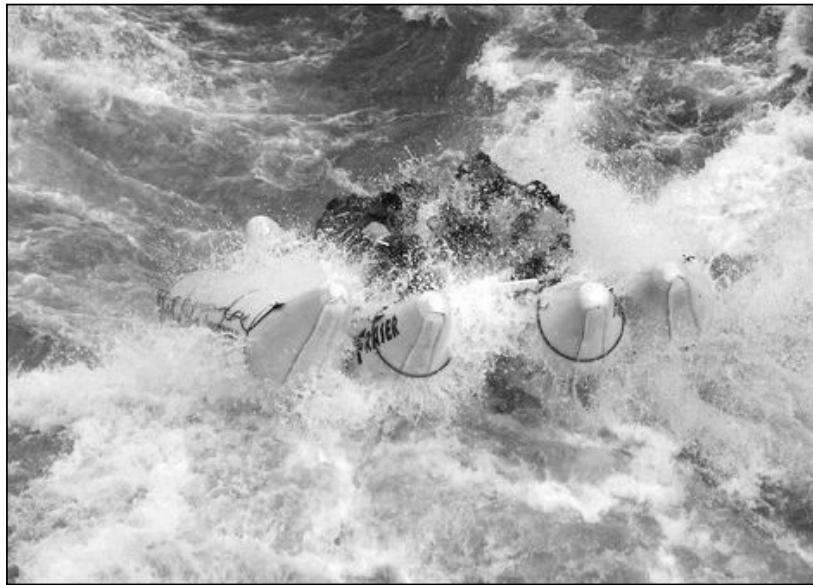
smolts that left in 2007, the problem happened between the mouth of the Fraser and the top of Vancouver Island. They didn't make it past the 70 fish farms.

This year we are planning to run with the smolts and test them all the way along. I personally see DFO as irrelevant. I don't want to wait for DFO to do anything.

Now we're paddling down the Fraser River to go to the opening day of the Cohen Commission to say, we support you, but we want the truth. We want those fish farms' disease records. I have a strong feeling the Norwegian fish farms would rather leave than release those disease records.



through St'át'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Sto:lo



...from Hell to Hope...

Fourteen people from Lillooet and Lytton were piloted from Boston Bar to Hope by Fraser River Expeditions. Along with Alexandra Morton, they were embarking on a Paddle to bring hope to the hellish situation Fraser communities have been experiencing without salmon.

“The thread connecting the indigenous nations on this fish farming issue is aboriginal title. There is a provincial and federal government that continue to deny that, in spite of their Supreme Court rulings that recognize our title. That should be a cause for concern.”

- Chief Bob Chamberlain, Kwicksutaineuk Ah-Kwa-Mish.
Vice President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs

Chief Chamberlain met the people at Hope on Tuesday night, October 19th, as they

prepared to begin the Paddle the next morning. Chamberlain has been

active in court, overseas, and in the media to get farms out of his territory.

Above, Byron Spinks of Lytton, Nlaka'pamux, and William Spencer of Lillooet Salmon Talks. The two are approaching a rock statue of importance in the Fraser, just below Hell's Gate - the meditation place of an Nlaka'pamux Chief, and possibly the source of Fraser sturgeon.



Chawathil

"Salmon Are Sacred has everything to do with the livelihood of our people."

- Chief Rhoda Peters, Chawathil (Hope)

Chief Rhoda Peters welcomed the paddlers at Hope, at the Chawathil's Telte Yet campground. She explained how it was a whole community effort to host the Paddle - supper was made by the Elders, and the youth singing and dance group honoured the travelers with their songs.

She spoke for the

documentary film that is being made of the Paddle for Wild Salmon. "The Cohen Commission is something people should really be aware of. It's on the news and in the papers, but I'm not sure they understand what the issue is.

"Just to have our Elders on shore when we left was an honour for us as

we paddled away. This should educate the young people about how important the salmon are for us. 'Salmon are Sacred' has everything to do with the livelihood of our people: the fish farms are contaminating the salmon."

Chief Peters continued with the Paddle to Vancouver.



"We are at a crossroads when it comes to wild salmon in B.C. The Paddle will demonstrate that there are lots of people who want to see wild salmon protected."

- Grand Chief Clarence Pennier, President, Sto:lo Tribal Council

Grand Chief Clarence Pennier of the Sto:lo saw the Paddle to the river on the first morning. (Pictured above)

The Assembly of First Nations' National Chief Shawn Atleo, pictured at

right, met the people as they departed from Hope on the morning of the 20th.

He sang an Ahousat prayer song for a safe journey. "Our people use boats a lot. We know that before you push off from shore

you have to be ready and unified;

you have to be of one mind. And that's what we have to do to combat the fish farms."

Telte Yet Campsite
MEANING "UP RIVER PEOPLE"

- * 10 1/2 Acres nestled in trees
- * On the banks of the Fraser River
- * 29 Serviced lots
- * Ample Drive-in Spaces and Tenting Accommodation
- * Laundromat
- * Hot Shower Facilities
- * Sanit Station
- * Spring to Fall

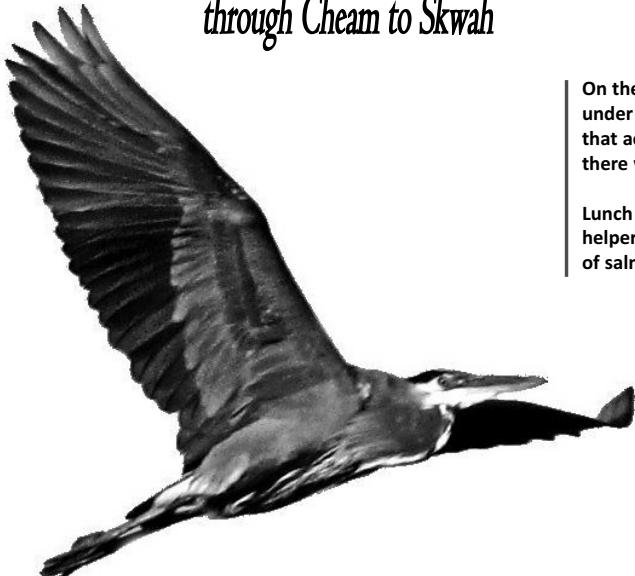
STO:LO HERITAGE
by Sto:lo Indian Artisans & Craftsmen

* CARVINGS * MASKS * BASKETRY * JEWELRY * SALISH
* WEAVING * KNITTING * MOCCASINS * THE MILLENNIUM TOTEM POLE

• REASONABLE RATES • CENTRAL LOCATION
• WALK TO TOWN • ECONOMICAL GROUP RATES
PHONE: 604-869-9481 600 WATER AVE., HOPE, B.C.



through Cheam to Skwah



Herons were plentiful along the river, as were eagles, vultures, seals, seagulls, and lots of Chum and Chinook salmon jumping and surfacing near the canoes.

However, from Boston Bar to Musqueam, no one saw a bear or deer.

Below, Chief Jack Mussel of the Skwah Band, Sto:lo, is out on the beach welcoming the Paddle for Wild Salmon.

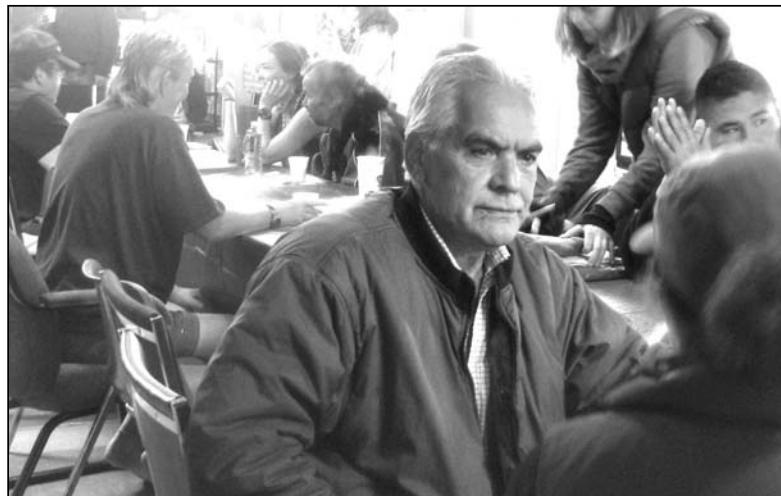
The community hosted paddlers with a supper and breakfast, a warm dry community house to sleep in, and pop-up tents to give shelter from the damp.

On the first day of paddling, October 20, almost 60 kilometers went by under the five Voyager canoes - 60 people, and several canoes and kayaks that accompanied them. Hope Search and Rescue followed the Paddle, but there were no mishaps at any time over the six-day journey to Vancouver.

Lunch was served up at Cheam Beach by Councilor June Quipp and her helpers. June and her son Rick spoke to the paddlers about the importance of salmon to the Cheam.

Rick Quipp: "We are the fish. Look back at our history - our bones were 95% fish. Now we get big belies from eating at McDonalds; our Elders lose their feet from diabetes."

June Quipp: "When you people do this trip you know you're not all indigenous because you get recognition in the media. You don't get the message, 'go home and get a job.'"



"The problem with the salmon is the same as it was with the Stein Valley when they wanted to log it. They said, 'look at this dot on the map.'

We said no, it's not just that - they were showing us a patch of old forest. It's bigger than that one spot, and with the salmon, it's not only the lice and disease from the farms - there are 80 different things affecting them, and we have to look at each of these."

- Chief Jack Mussel,
Skwah, Sto:lo

Matsqui

Chief Marilyn Baptiste, Xeni Gwetin, Tsilh'qotin, paddled all the way from Hope to Vancouver.

"I'm here to support our wild salmon, to put our voice out there to protect the wild stocks. They are a part of our being, a part of our values, and salmon is our way of life.

"Now we are trying to protect Taseko River from the draining of Fish Lake to make a mine tailings pool. The waste water would flow into the Taseko and then into the Fraser River.

We protected our land and waters back in 1864 when the warriors stopped the road coming in

from the coast side of our Tsilh'qotin territory. They were after gold then and they're after gold now in our south-eastern trapline. We knew then if that happened it would threaten our fish and wildlife, and that's exactly the same fight we have on our hands now. It's not possible for us to compromise the land, air and water that sustain our people.

We must protect the headwaters in the Tsilh'qotin for the salmon, and since I was young I was aware that the fish farms threaten our salmon on the coast. So I'm glad to lend my voice to this Paddle, along with my Elder Gilbert Solomon and my niece.

"I hope the Cohen Commission takes seriously everything they hear from the First Nations people in their travels."

- Chief Alice McKay, Matsqui



Matsqui hosted Paddlers on the night of October 21, opening a community house to the people and providing dinner and breakfast.

Chief McKay of Matsqui: "I am very much in support of these fish

farms going away. It's very important to come together - the more people, the stronger our voice.

First Nations are always blamed for missing fish. I don't think that's true - I think it's mismanagement. I wish DFO and First Nations could just work

Right, another sign of Squamish support for the *Get Out Migration*: a huge message promoting Salmon Are Sacred beams out from their new digital billboard at the south end of the city of Squamish.

closely and equally, instead of First Nations just being someone they come and see now and then. We know the

river, we know the fish and we don't need to be biologists to have something important to contribute.

I worry sometimes about the fight we've been fighting for so many years. Some people are getting tired and we need some

new voices in the young people to carry on. We need the coming together of the young people and the Elders to see what we can really do to protect the fish, and not put a dollar value on it. Putting a dollar value on the fish hasn't helped."



Chief Marilyn Baptiste, Xeni Gwetin, Tsilh'qotin and Hereditary Chief Robert Williams, Squamish, on the way to Matsqui.

Aaron Williams, Skokomish, (below) led the paddlers in on-river protocols. When approaching a community, all would turn their oars upside down and hold them up. Luckily, each community wanted the people to come ashore - and offered a welcome. At that, each canoe turned around and went ashore stern first. Williams has traveled with Tribal Journeys, and spoke for the travelers in a respectful and appropriate way.



All the Matsqui family leadership were present to welcome the Paddle. In this photo, from left to right, they are: Margaret Julian, Julian family representative; Beth Williams, singer and drummer; Brenda Morgan, Matsqui First Nation Councilor; Chief Alice McKay; Cindy Collins, Collins Family Representative; Louis Julian, Matsqui First Nation Councilor; Debbie Bird, Bird Family Representative.

through Qayqayt to Musqueam



The paddlers were pulling all day - 50 kilometers along a slow stretch of river - from 9am to 5pm, with a lunch break at the Fraser River Discovery Center. There a press conference had been called by Fin Donnelly, elected NDP Member of Parliament for New Westminster-Coquitlam and Port Moody. (photos next page) The Chief of Qayqayt, also known as the New Westminster Indian Band, was unavailable but sent her son to welcome the people ashore.



On Saturday, October 23, the Paddle traveled from Katzie to Musqueam.

The flotilla was met by Musqueam Fisheries officer Dick Louis at the territorial boundary - the Port Mann Bridge, pictured above.

The Musqueam fishing patrol boat escorted the paddle through to the Musqueam Reserve near UBC that night.

Right, pulling in to the quay at the Fraser River Discovery Center in Qayqayt - New Westminster.



People of all kinds came together to paddle the river for salmon. There were MLA's, Mayors and Councilors, Chiefs and Elders, the President of the Wilderness Tourism Association of BC, guiding outfitters and former fish farm employees.

People's concerns for salmon typically extended beyond the fish-farm issue, but everyone recognizes that they are a common threat to all stocks of Fraser salmon migrating between Vancouver Island and the mainland. That includes every Fraser stock except the Harrison, which has been increasing in number over the past decade.

Sara Jennings of Whistler, pictured above, explained her participation in the Paddle.



"As Vice President for the Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment I believe in protecting all species.

"Except for this year, the salmon have been disappearing so the Paddle for Salmon seemed like one way I could support protection of salmon from open net fish farming."

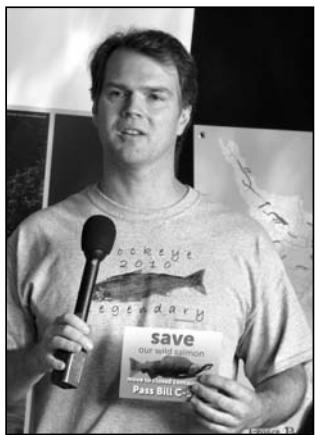
The Métis Nation of BC has standing as a formal participant in the Cohen Commission.

There are 35 chartered Métis Communities throughout the province.



The Métis Nation of BC "asserts Aboriginal rights to fishing in B.C. including the right to fish Sockeye Salmon from the Fraser River and Fraser bound Sockeye Salmon in tidal waters."

MNBC indicates that the DFO "has ignored Métis Rights and Interests" in Fraser River sockeye. One canoe holding the Metis flag joined the Paddle for two days.



Fin Donnelly, NDP Member of Parliament, New Westminster-Coquitlam and Port Moody, spoke to media in support of his Bill C-518 to ban open-net cage fish farms from the coastal migration route of wild salmon. He later commented on joining the Paddle.



"I support the message to protect wild salmon. It's heartening that so many people are heading the call to protect the salmon, whether native or non-native, and that's needed."

There was an Inquiry called out of last year's salmon collapse and this is not the first time; it's the fifth time since 1992. So, in 18 years there have been five investigations into why salmon are doing so poorly. This trend needs major attention.

I think the salmon are indicative of the myriad of issues that we face, we the people, from the pollution in the water and in the air and on land, to loss of habitat, to overconsumption. Those are three main categories of issues when you're talking about sustainability. We need to focus on those three main areas, and the salmon allows us to focus on sustainability that covers them.

I would like to see those addressed in a com-

prehensive way. Being the NDP Fisheries Critic and a newly elected Member of Parliament, one of the things I decided to address was sea lice coming from the fish farms. That is impacting the salmon and it's a problem we can do something about.

That won't solve all the problems, but I am saying this is a step in the right direction - we know we can take it and we should take it. Then we can work on the other issues that affect the salmon.

Alexandra Morton told the reporters, "We are not just raising awareness here, we have a specific message for Judge Cohen: get the fish farms to open up the database and let us see their disease records."

Speaking for a special documentary about the paddle, Morton explained:

"In the beginning, I told DFO when there were problems around the farms - the toxic algae blooms; the whales leaving; people shooting guns around the farms. Then I eventually realized - and that was a slow process, that they weren't going to do anything. There was no one for me to tell.

"I did ten years of research. I wrote papers, I

sent letters to DFO, I participated in every level of government possible, and nothing happened. And I finally realized that the piece of the puzzle that was missing was the people.

The peaceful and purposeful gathering, Ghandi and Martin Luther King showed us what to do, so we did it in April with the walk down Vancouver Island and we're doing it again now.

The Fraser sockeye have been in decline since these farms came into the water. They say, 'we're not the problem.' They say, 'we care about wild salmon,' and I say, prove it. If the farms are not the cause, show us the data. But they won't release their disease

records.

That's why we're going to Justice Cohen. The Aquaculture Coalition for the Commission is demanding to see those disease records to evaluate the impact of fish farms on the 2009 sockeye crash. I bet you the fish farms won't give us the records. I bet they would rather leave than do that.

DFO's opinion is basically that fish farms have no impact on wild salmon. If we prove that fish farms are a leading cause of wild salmon decline, it's DFO's fault. Only the people can untangle this, because the politicians are so caught up in it, they're just sticky with it."



Grand Chief Philip and his wife, and MP Fin Donnelly all joined the canoes at New Westminster.

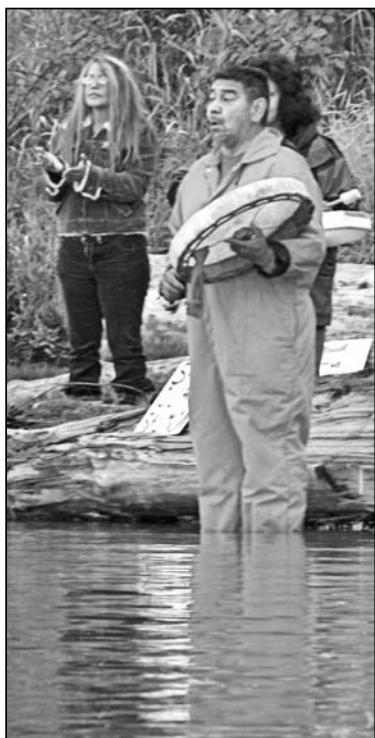
Right, Andrew Sylvester pulls in the safety raft at his grandfather's house in Katzie.

Grand Chief Stewart Philip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, spoke to media of being encouraged that, "the spirit that was shown in the 1960's and 70's has reawakened among aboriginal communities, and now it's

not only indigenous nations standing up." He praised Alexandra Morton's "critical voice" for wild salmon. Philip's wife Joan also addressed the news media, stating the importance of working together for the salmon we all rely on.



Katzie to Musqueam



"One day someone is going to have to listen to the aboriginal people. An open table is what has to happen, and there are about 100 villages on the Fraser River. We have to ask, what did you see? What did you miss? Aboriginal people have to have a say." - Willie Pierre, Cultural and spiritual Elder of Katzie

Paddlers pulled in to the home of Willie Pierre, Cultural and Spiritual Elder of the Katzie First Nation. People camped in his river-front yard on October 22.

"Farmed fish is something that doesn't match the wild species - we shouldn't even be eating them. The meat falls apart by the time you cook it; it's not flavourful; it doesn't have the nourishment the wild stocks do. I don't believe in fish farms.

Many people who come to the shores of Katzie are looking for answers - how do we protect the salmon?

The Cohen Commission. What's going to happen? Are there aboriginal people involved in the Commission? Are they going to be blamed for the decline? What do they expect by talking to the people, now that they have talked to the biologists? Last year they told us lots of fish were coming back. When aboriginal people spoke up they said, no, you're wrong, and slammed the door - just like in residential school. One day someone is going to have to listen to the aboriginal people. An open table is what has to happen, and there are about 100 villages on the Fraser

River. We have to ask, what did you see? What did you miss? Aboriginal people have to have a say.

For a long time we always managed to fight - it's your fault; it's your fault. Now we have to learn to work together. There has to be something for our grandchildren. Our young people are the ones who are going to suffer through it.

All the paddlers have an interest in the answers. Each one is a witness. Are they going to have the right words to take back to their villages? Someone here from Prince George hasn't seen salmon for years. What happened?"



"We're behind you 110% in this cause. There's a reason our villages are all along the river and coast."

- Chief Ernie Campbell, Musqueam

The flotilla of seven Voyageur canoes was met at Musqueam docks by singers and drummers on Saturday night, October 23. The Chief met the travelers on the riverbank, pictured

below.

Later that night, at supper at the Hall, a Musqueam Councilor spoke to their local situation. "A creek runs through our community. That is the last

salmon bearing stream near here. We think it is because that stream comes through our community. We have Coho and Chum, but those stocks are dwindling."



Melaney Gleeson-Lyall stood on the pier in the wind and sang a song of welcome. Below, Chief Ernie Campbell welcomes the Paddle.



pulling to the rally, October 25

"If there are changes in the regulations for salmon farms, people on the Fraser River should ask to be consulted on each and every one farm." - Darren Blaney, Homalco



Darren Blaney, former Chief of Homalco, and some of his family traveled by dug-out canoe across the Salish Sea from Nanaimo to Musqueam October 23 to join the Paddle.

"With the Cohen Commission I hope we will have another voice saying, put the fish farms into closed containment. We had the mayor of Vancouver with us on the Paddle, and he was also on the Premier's Committee about this issue, and they recommended closed-containment also.

I was involved in the First Nations Strategic Alliance on Aquaculture, and we were to work with the province through the First Nations Leadership Council. As soon as we asked for routes to be cleared of

farms, for salmon to migrate through, all our initiatives stalled.

One of the things we wanted was First Nations watchmen in our territories to enforce regulations on fish farms. They are not accountable right now - not at all. I hope Cohen is not ignored along with all these other recommendations.

But a lot of these committees, working groups and commissions are delay tactics. And this business just carries on as usual. If you ask me, I don't have a lot of faith in the Cohen Commission - since we have DFO with jurisdiction over the farms now, and they are promoting salmon farming. They are not doing their job.

What I like about the Paddle for Wild Salmon is the

awareness of people up the Fraser about this issue. With the Georgia Strait Alliance I have been traveling there and speaking over the last few years. There's one more step people on the Fraser haven't taken - if there are changes in the regulations for salmon farms coming along, they should ask to be consulted on each and every one farm. If they do that, they can really backlog the system. The feds will ask them to put themselves into groups, but we have always resisted that. I think every First Nation is sovereign and has its own issues, and they should consult separately. But perhaps the government is going to do what it's doing at Fish Lake and expect the people are poor and won't take them to court."

Tla-o-qui-aht Councilor Terry Dorward-Seitcher joined the get out Migration with six passengers. He commented on joining the Paddle:

"We in Tla-o-qui-aht have a number of fish farms in our traditional territory, all owned by Creative Salmon Company Ltd. It's a Canadian-based Japanese-owned farm, and it releases a lot of antibiotics into our coastal waters. There's the threat of sea lice, impacts to sea lions, and we feel, as Tla-o-qui-aht, that they need to go to closed-containment for those reasons.

The farms support a

small number of labour jobs, but some of us think the impacts outweigh the employment opportunities.

By asking them to move to closed containment, we are telling the company and the governments that we will take a stand on this issue. It's an unnatural industry that we perceive as a threat to our coastal waters.

The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation is moving towards implementing an ecosystem service fee for local businesses that rely on the beauty of the land and waters here, like tourism, but this type of industry - fish farming - is affecting that. The ecosystem service



fee is to ensure the well-being of the coastal waters and those that live within it. Fish farms are not conducive to that process."

Ora Corgan and Tsmka Martin sit in front of Terry Dorward-Seitcher in the Tla-o-qui-aht dug-out. They paddled across the Salish Sea to join the Salmon Are Sacred flotilla.
Photo by Don Staniford

“Wild salmon are far more important to us both financially and for our well being than what we find in the farms’ net-cages.”

- Chief Bob Chamberlain, Kwicksutaineuk Ah-Kwa-Mish. UBCIC Vice President.

Chief Bob Chamberlain spoke while presenting the salmon scroll at the Cohen Commission on Monday, October 25.

Decision makers are turning a blind eye to this, and we see it as a real impact to wild salmon.

We're here to support the Cohen Inquiry, to ensure that our truths are heard, that all British Columbians who value wild salmon are being heard, and to ensure the complete

and thorough disease and medication records are disclosed, analyzed and understood, so we can quantify the impact salmon farms have on our wild salmon.

We cannot be lulled to sleep by the incredible run this year; this last summer makes Gail Shea's words last year hollow, saying the cause of the salmon decline was global warming, that there was not enough food on the ocean. And this summer disproves

that. That tells me the Minister is not sure what is going on.

We need to look at Alaska - their salmon runs are doing very well, and there are no salmon farms. We need to get past this. It's time for British Columbians and Canadians alike to stand up and say that wild salmon are far more important to us both financially and for our well being than what we find in the net-cages.



The Wild Salmon People

Because we live in a democracy, we can change government, but only if a better option exists. Democracy means the ultimate power is vested in the people. Clearly it is not enough to just let elections happen to us.

Here is what I propose. Keep your current party memberships and build an enormous voting block across all parties. Starting in November, I will contact every politician in British Columbia to find out what their plan is to achieve sustainable prosperity based on sound social, ecological and economic principles.

If there are enough of us, a political party will rise or adapt to meet us. Wild salmon are a living icon of democracy and we choose their name to represent us. www.wildsalmonpeople.ca

Alexandra Morton